

Amendment Striking Section 515
of the Foreign Assistance Act

The Senate is expected, in the next day or so, to vote on an amendment striking section 515 of the Foreign Assistance Act (S. 3390). The issues at stake are extremely important particularly at this moment in history when strenuous efforts are being made to stabilize the military situation in Southeast Asia so that the war can be wound down.

Section 5(4) of S. 3390 would undermine these efforts by a new Section 515 to the Foreign Assistance Act which would:

- Prohibit, generally, U.S. funding of military operations by foreign forces in Laos, North Vietnam or Thailand.
- Condition such funding on prior congressional approval.
- Require prior disclosure of the exact details of the proposed military operation to the Congress.
- Restrict the military operation to the area designated by the Congress.

These requirements seriously threaten ongoing efforts by the President and our allies in Southeast Asia.

The proposed legislation must be assessed in the light of the consequences which could ensue as a result of its passage:

1. Concomitant with the removal of our last brigade of combat troops from Vietnam, the availability of military assistance will be restricted for the local self-defense efforts which replace direct involvement by U.S. forces.

2. Support for Thai volunteers serving in irregular forces in Laos would be hampered at the same time that their current use is generally considered to be vital to the continued independence and neutrality of Laos.

3. In the event of the loss of Laos, more than two divisions of main-line North Vietnamese troops now tied down in Laos would be freed for action in South Vietnam.

4. Restrictions on South Vietnamese operations in Laos would restore and guarantee to North Vietnam inviolate sanctuaries.

5. North Vietnamese troops would be given unopposed access to lines of communication and military supply lines through Laos.

6. North Vietnam would be granted freedom to mount actions in South Vietnam from secure border areas which would just be miles from key targets in South Vietnam.

7. If Laos is lost it could no longer serve as a buffer between Thailand and North Vietnam which would raise the possibility of a confrontation between North Vietnam and Thailand and also raise the question of our commitment to Thailand under the SEATO treaty.

8. Any military operation which the Congress might ultimately vote to support would in the process be so delayed that the operation could no longer be effective in view of the exigencies of war.

9. The exact details of a military operation would be widely available long before the battle is fought, a security risk that no nation could undertake in consideration for the safety of its troops

and the success of the military operation.

Finally, at this moment in history it is particularly important that the U. S. not signal to the North Vietnamese an apparently drastic change in our Southeast Asian policy which the enactment of Section 515 of the Foreign Assistance Act would imply.

and the success of the military operation.

I seriously doubt that at this moment in history that it is in the best interests of the United States to signal to either the North Vietnamese or to our allies in Southeast Asia the drastic change in U.S. policy which would result with the enactment of new Section 515 of the Foreign Assistance Act. For this reason I solicit your support for my amendment which would delete the provision from S. 3390.

Sincerely,